

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A NARROW ESCAPE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DENIS DONNE," "NO ALTERNATIVE," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXVIII. MORE JUST THAN GENEROUS.

FRANK is gone from the room, in a huff, be it remembered.

Kate is alone with the moonlight, which she has forgotten to shut out, and the lamplight by which she is trying to read this letter, which trembles in her hand. She has cast her all upon the hazard of a die, and she knows that she has done this as she stands there, with the letter quivering like an aspen leaf in her grasp. The commencement is not auspicious; when a man has been in the habit of calling a girl by her Christian name, it looks ill for the continuance of their intimacy if he suddenly and seriously addresses her as—

"MY DEAR MISS MERVYN,—Is my coming to call on you likely to give happiness to either of us? Is not the wish that I should do so rather a desire on your part to exercise your power and authority over me, to show to me and to prove to yourself that you have this power and authority? For many months we held habitual and friendly intercourse, and during that time if I ever attempted to pass the bounds of conventional friendship with you, you consistently repulsed me. I attributed this to your keen recollection of an offence against you which was purely accidental on my part, and for which I was anxious to atone in a way that I fervently hoped, and truly believed, would have conduced to the happiness of us both. You judged differently, and took the word of a stranger in preference to mine! Kate, that was your first, your only error. I have striven as earnestly and honestly as a man can strive to remove the false impression, and resus-

citate the possibility of our being happy together. But, for a time, your will intervened, and now, to be honest and truthful with you still, a doubt of your perfect integrity and fidelity is intervening. Is it true—tell me for Heaven's sake—that you loved your Cousin Frank, so disloyally and unwisely, that you would have parted him from the girl to whom he was engaged? That you spared no lure, no temptation that might have led him to dishonour himself? These are hard words with which to question the woman I love, but they will get themselves spoken. That you should have loved him is easily enough understood. That you should have tried to make him break his word, and forget his honour, is, in my eyes, an unpardonable thing. Your simple denial of the charge will be enough for me. I would, at any time, take your word against the world's. That denial will bring me back to you, and make me try to win your heart more earnestly than ever. Think with what impatience I wait for it.—Yours,

"HARRY BELLAIRS."

She reads the letter through twice, and feels as if her brain were bursting, and her heart broken. But there is no sign of agitation in the wording or writing of the note which she indites and despatches without a minute's delay—

"It is perfectly true. Good-bye."

The letter is gone, and with it her hopes of ever attaching solely and wholly to herself that faithful friendship, that good loyal love, that brave, generous, honest fellow who will cut his own heart out rather than condone duplicity. "It is perfectly true, it is perfectly true; but if I could only bring myself to explain to him how it all came about, he would forgive me, I am sure," she says to her-

self, as she sits gazing into vacancy, forgetful even of her all-important work in this first hour of her anguish.

To be accused of disloyalty, of want of honour towards another woman, of having attempted to sap and undermine the fidelity of a man—this is indeed a novel form of misery for poor, proud Kate. The fascination and finesse, the light lure and graceful, gay fooling with which she had sought to win Frank in those days of her loving him before he was married, had all come so easily to her, and had all been evoked by such a strong set of circumstances! It had never occurred to her to blame herself, or to look shamefacedly on either her motives or her actions. Indeed, she had rather been disposed to hold herself as guiltless and Frank as guilty, in being so weak and vacillating, so easily swayed backwards and forwards between love and duty. But now, when Harry Bellairs calls her conduct by its true name, she sees it in its right light, and owns herself justly repulsed and defeated.

Justly; but how cruelly! As cruelly as most women are defeated in the great romantic game of chess which they call love.

Wearily, presently she turns to her work, and traces line after line in her efforts to delineate the joys and sorrows of those fictitious friends of hers, by means of whom she hopes to live now. Unconsciously she makes those joys akin to some which she has known, those sorrows most strangely like those she is bearing at present. Love, disappointment, and penury, these are the themes on which she finds she can dilate most freely and most forcibly.

Her pen travels very freely to-night. "What is it that carries her along?" she questions of herself as the hours pass by, and she finds herself going on writing, in a way that is singularly effortless. It is in reality the strong necessity which her nature feels for respite from the thought of this womanly love of hers, which, woman-like, she is attempting to keep at bay by means of work.

The clocks in the neighbourhood strike one, and, as they do so, she rises up with a gasp of physical fatigue, and the recollection that she has not tasted food for twelve hours. For Kate pursues the abominably bad plan of dining in the middle of the day, and working after her dinner. Consequently her digestion is impaired, her work upset, and her day spoilt by being badly divided.

It is hard work for a woman who has been taxing her imagination for hours, to rise up from her desk, and practically assist herself to the necessities of life. It is odious to feel that unless you put away all your finer fancies for a time, thereby running the risk of losing them altogether, and go to work in a prosaic way to find fuel to feed the poetic fire, that you will presently be so physically weak as to be disabled altogether, and utterly unfit to continue in the course in which you are bound to run unless you would perish. If some loving hand could minister to Kate now, for instance, she would finish this chapter ever so much better than she will now, for she will return to it with a broken interest and a perplexed feeling of doubt as to its being worth while to struggle on, merely for the means of sustaining the struggle.

This doubt, this feeling, is paramount in her mind as she comes back to her writing-table, and it sadly interferes with composition. She has not indulged herself with another reading of that honest, harsh letter of his, all this time; but now, as she sits here doing nothing, and not feeling capable of doing anything, she feels that there will be a certain amount of relaxation in the very pain which she will compel herself to endure in the reperusal of it. So she takes it up, and walks over to the window, meaning to read it by the moonlight.

She stands there—a very pretty figure, in a clinging neutral-hued dress. Her head is bent, her face is sad, her eyes are riveted on the pages of the letter paper. She is unconscious of observation, absorbed in the memories of the past, and the intense consciousness that those memories present happier possibilities to her, than the realities of to-day, or the time to come can conjure up. Her little nervous hands hold the paper tightly, lovingly, "If I were younger I'd burn it with my lips," she says, as she flutters the letter towards her bent face, and refrains from committing that crowning act of folly.

Surely we all know how we read over and over again words that are already imprinted on our minds? They are indited by a hand we love—a hand that has hurt us in all probability, or that at any rate has been very willing to apply the correcting rod. But as soon as it condescends to pen a letter to us, how we gloat over the chastening treasure, and read, and re-read, and dwell upon each

word and comma, and endeavour with all our heart, and will, and force, to make so much out of so little!

She is standing thus, when a man passes and sees her, and she is unaware that she is seen. The road is very quiet. With the exception of a cat or two upon the tiles opposite, and a policeman patrolling vaguely and aimlessly at the end of the terrace, there is no one near. Juliet-like she bends out of her window, but un-Juliet-like she abstains from rashly apostrophising the moon or any person by name. But she says,

"If he were here I know I could make him understand the why and wherefore of it all," she says aloud (very foolishly) to herself, and as she says it, the man who has been patrolling, pulls himself up abreast of her window, and calls out, clearly,

"God bless you, Kate, I am here, and you shall make me understand the why and wherefore of it to-morrow morning."

He is standing there, handsome, powerful, and strong, underneath her window, and the girl disregards propriety in her joy, and bends down to speak to him, to tell him that she is glad he is there.

"Have you had my answer?" she asks. "No, the post is no Mercury, to put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes. Harry you are here because you don't know what I have written, you don't know yet that I have told you that it is all true."

"I am here because—I am a fool," he says, with a certain amount of truthfulness, for he feels that there is something incongruous in this conversation at an open window in a by-road in Bayswater. Then he sees her lamp flare, and observes that she retreats hurriedly from the window, and goes away smoking his midnight cigar, with the wretched consciousness upon him that, by his ill-advised conduct, he has brought Kate into an awkward position with her landlady.

His conscience does not prick him undeservedly. The mistress of the house is a dragon as regards the respectability and virtue of others, and thinks it necessary to keep vigilant watch and ward over the proceedings of her lodgers. The conversation at the window has not been lost upon her, and she comes into the room now after one passionate knock which she does not wait to have responded to in any way, and takes Kate unawares.

"Do you know that this is a respectable

house, Miss?" she begins shivering out her words. "What the drawing-rooms must think of such goings on, I don't know. If I lose them through this, I shall let them know—and let everybody else know—what I think of you."

"But," Kate begins protesting, as the woman brings her tirade to a conclusion, "I have done nothing but speak to a person I know through an open window—"

"Ah! how does that person come to be here at your open window?" the British matron asks, or rather shrieks. "Tell me, indeed! I know what open windows mean, and I know what good-looking young women mean when they sit up writing late at night. I like to call things by their right names, I do; and pleasant-spoken young lady as you are, if the drawing-rooms take it up, I shall say 'go you must.'"

The woman is standing holding the door in one hand, and a chamber-candlestick in the other. She is robed in a horrible red dressing-gown, which pales before a visage that has become inflamed by the exertion she has used to be at once impressive and aggressive. Kate looks at her, at this woman who dares to bring an accusation against her, and all the purity and refinement which have surrounded Kate from her cradle urge her to rise in revolt against her tormentor.

"Leave my room now, and I will leave your house in the morning," she says quietly. Then for fear she should break down and cry before this woman, Kate turns to the window, hoping to gather strength from the fresh, free air, and courage from the sight of the man who loves her still, coldly as he has called his judgment to his aid about her.

But he has seen another shadow in her room, and by reason of the very love he bears her, he has taken himself out of the way, fearing that his presence near may be detrimental to her reputation in that other person's eyes. After the manner of men in love in general, and of Irishmen in particular, he is cautious in the wrong place about the woman he loves.

The virago in the red dressing-gown is quick to hear, and prompt to see, whatever may be disagreeable to the person to whom she is temporarily opposing herself. She catches a sound of the short, deep sigh which Kate cannot help heaving as she watches Harry Bellairs turn the corner of the street and stride out of reach of her,

however much she may need. The look of disappointment, too, is legibly stamped upon her face as she turns it roomwards again.

"Gone away the moment he thought he might get himself into trouble, like all your fine gentlemen do when you ladies hold yourselves too cheap," the woman sniggers; and as she flounces out of the room, and lets the door fall behind her in a way that is very derogatory to the dignity of the occupant of the room, Kate feels that there is a certain sort of broad, coarse justice in the woman's last remark.

"I have built upon shifting sands," the girl thinks as she sits down, and resolutely tries to look into and prepare for the future. "I have trusted and vainly believed in man after man, woman after woman, and they have all proved themselves to be houses built upon the sand. I have worked for the present need—I have been mindful only of the present hour—I have set myself so low a mark to aim at that I have had no pride in touching even it—I have suffered myself to be trammelled by my sex; and I am punished."

She gives herself freely to regret and sorrow, for the necessity of that regret having arisen for a while. Then she rises up, prepared to carve out such a future for herself as shall make it so dear to her that she can never bemoan the past. She does not in this first hour of enthusiasm attempt to lay down any definite "noble aim" which she will struggle to touch. But she vows—and she is not a woman to break a vow, though it be made to herself only—that whatever comes to her hand to do, she will do it with such fire and force and constancy, as will make her love her work, and find it all-sufficient.

All-sufficient, even though that sweetest leaven of life, Love, be denied to her for ever.

"The first thing I do to-morrow shall be to swallow my pride, and go and make a clean breast of it to Aunt Marian," Kate thinks as she lays the head that will be homeless to-morrow on the pillow this night. "If she doubts and rebuffs me! well, I'll win through by possessing my soul in patience."

CHAPTER XXIX. A RECOGNITION.

DOES any reasonable human being really believe that "absence makes the heart grow fonder"? or that "separation cements

the bonds of real love and friendship"? Surely not. Absence is a slow poison which must, sooner or later, emaciate, even if it does not effectually kill, the most robustly constituted affection. The only sort of love that is not weakened by absence is the pure love of parents for their children—of children for their parents—and the delightful spirit of comradeship which we call fraternal love. These bonds, once firmly made, are never broken. But in every other relation which exists between men and women, whether it be passionate love or sentimental friendship, separation is dangerous, not to say fatal. Fallen human nature needs the quick return of the sympathy that can only be fully expressed by lip, eye, and hand; pen, ink, and paper are utterly powerless to express it properly. Or even if it be sufficiently powerfully expressed to bring back the allegiance of the one to whom it is addressed, if it arrives in time, a hitch in the post official arrangements may delay it, until the subject about which sympathy was craved for so wildly only the other day, is dead and almost forgotten.

For months Kate Mervyn has been living her life apart from every member of her family. For months those finely-drawn, but almost imperceptible, barriers, the little incidental interests of everyday life, have been gone through on each side without the other side having any cognisance of them. Fresh figures have been painted in on the respective canvasses of their lives. Hopes have died, disappointments have been born to each and all of them; but the deaths and the births have not been notified by either to the other, though they have been of vital importance to those whom they have respectively affected.

But this belief in the inevitable change which must come over the separated, though it is a widely-spread one, is one about which few people trouble themselves to think, until they experience it in a mortifying way, or have to write about it. Kate Mervyn goes to her aunt's house the day after her dismissal on account of the feeling of "the drawing-rooms," in the firm faith that the Forests will be ready to resuscitate the past, between which and the present such a blank space intervenes. She really believes, in the profundity of her inexperience, that if they have heard nothing that is detrimental to her character, and therefore distressing to their

pride, they will be ready to help her to pick up all the broken threads, and join them neatly together again.

Unwisely enough, she puts herself at the great disadvantage of fatiguing herself, and getting dusty, and slightly disordered in attire, before she presents herself before her relatives. Executive women, who are compelled to spin from their own brain the materials for making the web which is their habitation, and, at the same time, are obliged to personally superintend and see to the general arrangement of the web, are not, it must be confessed, invariably such faultlessly appointed housewives, as are the women who have nothing on earth to do, but to supervise the wardrobes of their husbands and children, and the ordering of their house.

She has been obliged to trudge about for many weary hours in search of lodgings that are comfortable, respectable, and, at the same time, cheap. The three qualifications are rarely co-existent. Even when she lights upon the combination, it is in such out-of-the-way districts that she is naturally keenly averse to settling herself in any one of them. At length she comes upon a quiet little row of houses in Maida Vale, with little neatly-kept gardens in front of them, and, in front of the gardens, the Regent's Canal.

There is something strange and almost un-London like about the place. Looked at in a matter-of-fact way, there is nothing particularly picturesque in a coal barge; but it really is a very fine feature in the view, when you see it trailing its slow length along, silently, on a moonlight night. The sluggish, rippleless water is effective, too, in its imperturbable calm and density. A bounding, passionate river, that leaps over boulders, and breaks perpetually into cascades and waterfalls, has not half the power which this motionless canal possesses, of compelling us to stand still and consider.

By the time she has settled the terms for and inducted her belongings into the new lodgings, it is four o'clock in the afternoon, and Kate is, as has been said, at the great disadvantage of being dusty, disordered, and fatigued. The tight, plain, well-fitting black alpaca dress has taken several creases unto itself, by reason of having had its folds wedged in between some of the boxes which have been crammed into the cab. The equally well-fitting gloves have lost their pristine purity in the transit. Above all, the

face of the wearer of these things is shaded over by the physical fatigue that almost always supplements intense mental anxiety in the case of highly organised people, and there is a certain weary lassitude in her demeanour, which ought to warn her to stay at home to rest and recover.

She adventures into her aunt's house at an inauspicious moment. Afternoon tea is going on, so are two gentlemen, who are respectively forging chains wherewith to bind themselves to Gertrude and Marian. Little, delicate Dresden cups and saucers sit upon a silver tray—cups and saucers about which forget-me-nots, in high relief, twine. Silver doves, the birds of love, support a cake basket upon their extended wings; cupids sprawl over every perfectly-painted plate, and aim darts at Venuses and other scantily-attired people in the most sportive way. A bright, clear fire is blazing away merrily behind a painted glass screen, which seductively softens the light and makes it becoming. Dresses of the day, or, rather, of the hour, swathe the figures of the Misses Forest—dresses that cleverly unite the requirements of late autumn and early winter, that are not too rich in hue, and yet are, at the same time, warm in texture. These fit them like riding-habits, as to the bodies, and are buckled and poignarded about them, as to the tunics, in the most approved way. Their hair is tied back tightly, a little above the napes of their necks, in the newest and most artistic fashion of 1874, and allowed to fall down in a luxuriant pig-tail on to their backs. All is grace, warmth, beauty, and glow about the room and about its occupants. Kate, in her dingy attire, feels that she falls like a shadow upon them all, dimming their radiance. The two gentlemen, softened by the situation, have breathed words that fall musically upon the ears of Gertrude and Marian. Poor Kate's greeting, half timorous, half touching as it is, sounds like a discord. They do not mean to be unkind. They do not design to turn the cold shoulder upon her, and to show her that she is not wanted. But these things occur against their knowledge. They do not hate her in fact: but they had all been loving each other and themselves so comfortably and well before she appeared, that they cannot amalgamate with her. She comes in as utterly extraneous matter, foreign to the situation; and, as she falls upon them like a cloud, they fall upon her like a chill.

Mrs. Forest holds out a slender, cool hand, and says, "Kate, my dear, why invent surprises of this kind when life is so full of unavoidable ones? You should have written to say you were coming, and we would have been better prepared to receive you." She says this civilly enough, but she does not rise from her chair, and she does not embrace Kate; and poor Kate stands in their presence feeling very rickety on her feet, and very much as if she preferred her little dimity-hung solitude in Maida Vale to the silken splendour wherewith she is at present surrounded, and in the midst of which she feels so extremely uncomfortable.

The two girls have the grace to rise, and to sham a certain amount of pleasure.

"Kate, have a cup of tea at once; you looked fagged out," Gertrude says, putting one hand out to Kate and the other on the bell as she speaks. Marian even goes a step further. She lays a smooth, cool cheek against Kate's, and says,

"I am so glad to see you. We should have thought you were lost, dear, if we had had time to think about anything lately."

"Poor Frank's loss distracted our attention from everything else," Mrs. Forest interrupts, with an air of pious pride that is infinitely edifying.

"Poor Frank's losses," you should say, mamma," Marian laughs; "that poor dear unlucky Unwarrantable. I am sure I for one watched its death-throes with the most acute anxiety." Then she remembers that Kate must have watched its death-throes with an even keener anxiety, and she pulls herself up with that conscious look on her face, which is one of the most embarrassing forms of unintentional apology which one human being can offer to another.

There is a little re-assuring fuss made about the tea, under cover of which she steadies her head and her nerves, and sits down, and tries to gauge the exact depth of feeling there is in the waters which she has disturbed. Presently, as she gains self-command enough to turn her eyes away from her aunt, who is languidly questioning her as to what she is doing now, and asking her if she "won't come and spend a nice quiet day" with them, her attention is arrested by the earnest gaze of one of the men who is paving his way into bondage by means of afternoon tea. There is a familiar expression in the face that perplexes her, but before she can

identify it her aunt speaks to her again, and when she looks back at the place where he sat, he has gone to the other end of the room, where the piano stands, with Gertrude.

"It is a great comfort to me," Mrs. Forest goes on, in an irritatingly mechanical way, "that you should have devised such a pleasant and remunerative way of making an income, Kate. I don't always know what you write, but when I do I always read it with the greatest interest. I am sure if I had been blessed with the health to stand it, there is nothing that I should have liked better than writing myself; nothing."

Kate looks at her aunt in wonderment. The superb, the almost sublime, conceit is a genuine thing; it is not shammed. Mrs. Forest, be it remembered, is a woman who can wind about a subject gracefully enough with her tongue; with her pen she is capable of writing an invitation to dinner or an at-home.

"Then you don't think that I have disgraced you, aunt?" Kate questions, half satirically. The little double meaning in her words is known only to herself.

Mrs. Forest shakes her head. Her girls are well disposed of out of ear-shot with their respective admirers. Gertrude is struggling with a song, Marian is reading a new poem in a low voice. All is safe. She holds a kind hand out to the girl in the begrimed alpaca, and says,

"My dear child, is there any disgrace in poverty, in honest work, in the womanly wish to be independent of the relations who are far from being well off themselves? I esteem you for your exertions, Kate, and hope that you will continue to make them."

Kate is touched almost to laughter, and almost to tears, by the laudatory remark. She wisely refrains from either though; for extremes, she remembers, are dangerous. A glow of satisfaction diffuses itself through all her being as she realises from her aunt's manner that her aunt knows nothing of that childish, bitterly repented-of thoughtlessness which led her to suffer the will of the moment to lead her away so many years ago in Torquay.

"It is dead and buried; it will never be resuscitated," she tells herself with a gulp of honest joy. "Do I deserve this blessing that I may be good all my life, without the fear being ever present before me of having the folly of my very early girlhood cast in my teeth at any moment? Hard work,

poverty, obscurity, all these are nothing, now that the dread of being weighed down by the consequences of that brief madness is removed from me."

She tells herself this in happy faith. She ceases to be oppressed by the consciousness of the contrast there is between her costume and the costumes of her cousins. Dingy, dusty she may be, but no one present has heard such a false report of her as may induce them to think her degraded or depraved. No person who has not been falsely accused, can fully comprehend the awful bitterness of the shame one feels in the fact of the false accusation having been made. Conscious innocence is a very fair thing theoretically. But, practically, conscious innocence is no comfort whatever, to the one in whose bosom it reigns, when that one is smarting under slights, or ground down to the earth by scorn.

"Yes," Mrs. Forest says, resuming the subject with a jerk, "come and spend a nice, long, quiet day with us, Kate. What day will suit you now? It is always better to be definite, and I will arrange it."

"Really, aunt Marian," Kate says, "I don't want any special arrangements made for me; let me come in when I have time. If you are out, I can but go away again."

"The girls are so much engaged just now," Mrs. Forest says, in a lowered tone, "Mr. Clement Graham takes up a great deal of Gertrude's time, and there can be no doubt whatever of his object in doing it."

"Mr. Clement Graham!" Kate repeats, wonderingly.

"Yes," Mrs. Forest says, giving a warning glance towards the piano, where Gertrude's prey is entreating someone to "Love him once again, meet him once again," and avowing that he feels warm fingers clasped in his, and sees those quivering lips. "That is Mr. Clement Graham," Mrs. Forest goes on in a whisper, "he has been here a great deal lately, and in fact, my dear Kate, as a mother, I cannot blind myself to the truth; he admires Gertrude very much, and it will be a most excellent match for her."

As in a vision, Kate recalls the scene and the actors in it, when she last heard Clement Graham discussed in this house. She remembers Gertrude's indignation against her sister Marian, because Marian had bowed to the unfortunate man in the

park, and invited him to the house, in spite of his having been dismissed the service.

"He has succeeded in justifying himself in your eyes?" she asks, "he has proved himself innocent of everything save ——"

"He has come into a large fortune, dear boy," Mrs. Forest says, warmly, "don't exclaim, he'll hear you."

"Hear me! is he here?" Kate mutters, and the man at the piano facing round at the moment, she recognises, and is recognised by Clement Graham.

When last they met, she, a beautiful brilliant young girl, was dressed in a perfectly fitting riding-habit, and her brow was shaded by a hat. Now a black alpaca, gone from long wear of a rusty brown hue, drapes her unbecomingly, and conceals the symmetry of her faultless figure. Instead of the hat, care now shades her brow. But though these are great changes indeed, Clement recognises her.

He comes half a yard forward, he hesitates, stops and looks uneasily at her, and she all the time is gazing at him with wide open eyes, and with lips that are parted as if in fear. He, mild and innocent, and rather mean and small-minded young man as he is, looms before her as a dread avenger! He will tell the story of her flight to her relations, and they will never believe her version of it—never trust in her as a good true girl, whose sole fault was a fault of circumstances.

The moments are weighted by such painful feeling that they lag and seem like hours. In reality, the time is very short that is occupied in this by-play. Before Mrs. Forest and Gertrude are able to be perplexed, Mr. Clement Graham comes forward and says,

"I think we ought to know each other without an introduction."

AUTUMN IN LONDON A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

Two subjects especially engaged the attention of Londoners, at this season, a century ago—elections and highwaymen. There were two elections going on at once, a general parliamentary election, and the annual election for Lord Mayor. Nothing in our present newspaper experience comes up (or goes down) to the virulence and vulgar insult of the electioneering articles, placards, and pamphlets of that time. All sense of justice and of courtesy was laid

aside. The rule was to blacken an opponent by every available means. The famous John Wilkes was this year doubly elected—member of parliament for Middlesex, and Lord Mayor of London; and as he occupied a prominent position in public life, there was a give-and-take vituperation in connexion with him. In reference to his candidature for Middlesex, one of the newspapers said, "A fresh instance of the black ingratitude which has ever marked the life of Mr. Wilkes, occurs in his conduct to honest Humphrey Coates, who, in all times and difficulties, not only drew out his purse to aid him, but would as readily have drawn his sword, if occasion had rendered such an exercise of friendship requisite. So singularly abandoned was this god of the popular idolatry, that he presided at the very meeting where the two foolish lords, Pompey the Little and the stuttering school-boy from Germany, were nominated by his own command to oppose his old friend and valuable benefactor." Two "noble lords" are here pilloried, as well as Wilkes himself. On another day, the following appeared:—"The Attorney-General and Mr. Wilkes were observed yesterday in close conference in Holborn. They walked together to the end of Fetter-lane, where Mr. Wilkes turned down, went into the pork-shop in the middle of it, and bought a pound of sausages, which he wrapped up in his handkerchief, and then marched off for Princes-court." A county candidate, named Oliver, had a rhetorical stone thrown at him, thus:—"We admit that Sir Watkin Lewis's estate is no more than eight hundred pounds a year; but at the same time we defy, and call upon Parson Horne to declare, whether his perfect man Oliver has so much as eight pence a year estate in Great Britain; and in what city, county, or borough it is." A "Protestant Freeholder" announced in a newspaper that he would not vote for Joseph Scarwen, Esq., because (amid other choice bits of insult) "his mind is as feeble as his body." One candidate was to be opposed because he had belonged to the majority in the late Parliament, a body thus characterised:—"A loathed and detested Parliament, that was begotten in an ill hour, brought forth in division, and bred up in oppression; of a bloody countenance, hard breast, and seared conscience; that hath brought all the plagues of God upon a nation, turned the Church as by law established out of

doors, our love into hatred, and our freedom into slavery; and brought upon a brave and innocent people, instead of blessing, woes and lamentations." The flow of language in reference to the candidates for the mayoralty was, as nearly as possible, like that applied to the candidates for Parliament; we need not quote it further; suffice it to say that all gentlemanly treatment of gentlemen was abandoned.

Highwaymen, in the autumn of the year of which we are treating, appear to have become more numerous and daring, near London, than at any former period. It is literally true that not one single number of any London newspaper was without reports of highway outrages. The well-to-do classes seem to have been utterly paralysed or cowed, whenever they came in contact with the Dick Turpins of the road. The following samples will illustrate the general character of the narratives. "On Sunday evening, as Mr. and Mrs. Bailey were going in a carriage from Hammersmith to Turnham Green, they were stopped near the 'King of Bohemia' by three men well mounted, who robbed Mr. Bailey of two guineas. On being assured that he had no watch, they behaved very civilly, and rode off towards Chiswick." "Two chaises, nine coaches, and several waggons were robbed yesterday on Finchley Common, by five young highwaymen." "Lord North was attacked by a highwayman in Gunnersbury-lane, and Mr. Whittle at Holywell Mount, near Hoxton." Sometimes, but not often, the assailant got the worst of it. "The guard of the Exeter coach yesterday shot and killed a highwayman who attacked the coach at Turnham Green." The audacity of the fraternity on Finchley Common was something astounding. The same men would attack several coaches, one after another, compel the drivers to stop, and pillage the passengers of money, watches, jewellery, &c.; not unfrequently a single highwayman would do this, and with scarcely any fear that violence would be offered in return. The authorities did very little in the matter; but when affairs came to the worst we are told that "a horse-patrol is going to be established against the ensuing winter for the environs of London."

The footpads were quite as daring as the mounted thieves, allowing for the lesser facilities for escape. The papers were rife with such paragraphs as the following:—

"Thursday afternoon, about four o'clock, as a gentleman and his wife were walking from Copenhagen House to Kentish Town, they were met by two footpads, one of whom seized the lady, and, holding a large knife to her breast, threatened to murder her if her husband did not instantly tie up his money in his handkerchief, lay it on the grass, and proceed to the next stile. This being complied with, one of the villains took up the handkerchief, while the other stripped the lady of hat and two rings." "Three footpads, well armed, near Goswell Road turnpike, robbed a hackney-coach." "Last Monday evening, as Mr. Hodgson, of Lincoln's Inn, was coming from Hampstead, he was attacked by two footpads in the fields by Mother Black Cap's" (this hostelry is now in the busy High Street of Camden Town), "who robbed him of a diamond ring, a gold watch, and five guineas. One of them had a cutlass, which he held to the gentleman's breast, while the other searched his pockets." "On Saturday night an officer in the Guards was attacked in Bolton-street, Piccadilly, by two footpads, when he drew his sword and declared he would not be robbed, on which they both fired at him and then ran off. The officer was slightly wounded." "As Mr. Atkinson, of Walbrook, was coming home from Stepney, he was stopped in the fields at the back of the London Hospital" (certainly no fields there now) "by two men, who swore that if he did not immediately deliver, they would blow his brains out. He gave them what he had, to the amount of about thirty shillings; they went off swearing that if he did not bring more the next time he passed they would murder him." A pleasant prospect for Mr. Atkinson! "Mr. Reynolds, cheesemonger, of Southwark, was attacked last night, near Deptford, by three footpads, who, after robbing him of his watch and money, tied him neck and heels, and threw him into a ditch, where he was found early this morning almost expiring." "On Wednesday night, as a gentleman was going down Broad-street, a footpad took his hat and wig from his head, and got clear off." When we consider how indispensable a wig was to a gentleman in those days, this robbery must have "added insult to injury." We are not told whether it was the same property that was the subject of the following advertisement. "Found in the Hammersmith-road, last Sunday morning, about five o'clock, a hat and wig. Any

person owning the property may have it on application to Messrs. Easpett, goldsmiths, Whitcomb-street." The parks were terribly infested. "This day additional sentinels were stationed in Hyde Park, to prevent any further robberies, as several have lately been committed there."

Nor were burglars and house thieves less active, or more afraid of the wretched watchmen of those days. "On Saturday night two thieves, who, on Thursday, had robbed the Red Lion at Islington of four bank-notes, plate, &c., were apprehended in the pit of Sadler's Wells Theatre," at which their visit was, doubtless, part of a jollification. We must find a few words of pity for a poor schneider, in spite of his queer syntax: "William Beard, the poor journeyman tailor, advertised in this paper on Monday, that was robbed of some cloth belonging to two gentlemen, besides all the cloaths of his family, consisting of a wife and two children, while they were at work, returns thanks to those kind benefactors who have enabled him to pay for the cloth. He further implores the kind assistance of those who can feel the distresses of others, so that he may buy a few cloaths to shift for himself and family." Something like the following is not unknown at the present day, although we should hardly look for it in the learned region of the Temple: "Mary Carey was charged with inveigling children into the Temple, taking them to the top of one of the staircases at the chambers, and stripping them of their clothes." If we ever disbelieved the story of the Maid and the Magpie, on which Rossini founded his charming opera of *La Gazza Ladra*, let us do so no longer, after reading the following: "A few days since a table-spoon and a pair of sugar-tongs were missing from a gentleman's house near Lambeth; for which a servant girl was taken into custody, on suspicion of stealing the same. But three days afterwards, a raven was seen to carry a milkpot to the bottom of the garden, where, upon digging, they found all the other articles." The following is not often matched for elegant audacity in the present day: "A young woman, dressed in a very genteel manner, with a footman to attend her, under pretence of being taken suddenly ill, went into the shop of Mr. Soalward, tobacconist, near Spitalfields, and, having the appearance of a gentlewoman, was admitted into

the parlour, where she took an opportunity of stealing a silver coffee-pot, a dozen of tea-spoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, a milk-pot, and a metal watch, and got off with her booty undiscovered." One of the newspapers, moaning over the glaring prevalence of robberies, advised the Government to imitate "A resolution of George the Second, not to pardon house-breakers or street robbers for one whole year—it cleared the streets of those dangerous fellows." A famous hero of the *Newgate Calendar*, *Sixteen-String Jack*, came to his untimely end just a hundred years ago. One day, as we read, "John Rann, alias *Sixteen-String Jack*, was put to the bar for having, in company with one Cotton, stopped and robbed Dr. Bell, chaplain to the Princess Amelia, of money and his watch. The watch was afterwards offered in pawn, in *Berners-street*, by a Miss Roach and her niece. Suspicion being aroused, police-officers took them to *Bow-street*; where Jack, coming to see them, was recognised and caught." A few days later, we read, "*Sixteen-String Jack*, now under sentence of death in *Newgate*, was so strongly persuaded that he should be acquitted, that he ordered a genteel supper to be prepared for him and his friends on the evening of the day on which he was tried."

Of the doings of the Royal Family there were brief notices nearly every day. On the 22nd of September, the anniversary of the king's coronation, there was a grand gala at *St. James's Palace*. A day or two before this, "all the royal children arrived in town from *Kew*, in order to pay their duty to the throne on the succeeding festival of the king their father's accession to the throne of his ancestors." Majestic language this, considering that the little people were none of them more than twelve years old. One was actually a bishop of the mature age of eleven; for we are told, a week or two later, that "a suite of apartments are ordered to be fitted up immediately at *St. James's*, for the winter residence of the Prince of Wales and the Bishop of *Osnaburgh*, who are to reside there till the establishment of their household." Bishop of *Osnaburgh* was one of the titles of the prince afterwards better known as Duke of York, second son of George the Third. On another evening "a grand ball was given at *Kew Palace* to a great number of noblemen's children, in honour of Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal's birthday;" the said little

lady being just eight years old, and destined to become Queen of *Wurtemberg* twenty years or so later.

Concerning public amusements, the "little theatre in the *Haymarket*" closed for the season when the summer weather was departing; while the two theatres-royal opened about the same time, with a more constant repetition of sterling old plays, especially Shakespeare's, than we are accustomed to just now. *Sadler's Wells*, hardly dignified with the name of a theatre, delighted its audiences with rope dancing, jumping over garters seven feet high, ladder dancing, ballad singing, pantomime ballet, &c. One renowned performer danced on a rope with a man on his shoulders and two others tied to his feet. The advertisement for a particular fête night ended with this significant announcement:—"N.B.—It will be moonlight." *Sadler's Wells Theatre* was in the fields in those days, and the fields were much beset with footpads after dark. Moreover, there was danger arising from another source, that rendered moonlight a desideratum. Newspaper correspondents complained of the want of a railing on the side of the *New River*, between *Sadler's Wells* and *Islington*. "As the nights grow more dark, this footpath is the more dangerous; and as the *New River Company* acquire a nabob's income from the public, it will be greatly to their reproach if they do not, on a slight hint, remedy the inconvenience." Another writer presented the matter more sarcastically: "If the company prohibit men from washing their skins in the *New River* by day, it might not be unthrifty were they to prevent persons from sousing their greasy clothes and carcases in it by night." Mention was often made of particular theatrical performers in the newspapers, in such a way as to denote pretty clearly that judicious friends were endeavouring to give them a lift, thus—"A lover of theatrical merit presents his compliments to Mr. Thomas Weston, and should be glad to see him play the character of *King Lear*, in the tragedy of that name." *Vauxhall Gardens*, it appears, was generally the scene of a disturbance on the last night of each season, fomented by rackets young fellows fond of a mischievous lark. Such was the case just a hundred years ago. A number of young bucks or "bloods" broke nearly all the illumination lamps around the orchestra, and pulled off its hinges the door leading into it; about fifteen of these

fast men were captured and punished, but not without something which amounted almost to a riot. In connection with the amusements at a fair near London we read of one Mrs. Piddock who "performed several hornpipes in the newest taste; then exhibited the Italian plate-dance upon her fingers, twining them both ways as swift as the fly of a jack. Mrs. Piddock then set off with a macaronic jig, which she called the bandy-leg'd walk; and concluded with playing upon the Turkish triangle. Company were admitted to this extraordinary performance at one penny each." Mrs. Piddock certainly worked hard enough for her bread. And so did an actor at a country theatre in the same month, at a time when "trade was slack" among the fraternity, and when each performer's pay depended on the night's receipts; he played Richard the Third, danced a minuet, read a lecture on Heads, acted Petruchio, and danced a hornpipe, all for four-pence-halfpenny!

The river amusements of that day differed from ours in many ways, chiefly in the absence of steamboats. A day's pleasure is described of a party of friends, who went up the Thames in a large two-oared boat, aided occasionally by a sail. Among the good things provided for their picnic were a roast goose, a baked leg of mutton, a lamb pie, a keg of old stout, and a bottle of Hollands. Up about Chelsea and Battersea a sudden squall soaked them all with river water, and caused the keg to roll into the river. Being put on shore (mostly fields in those days), they found a quiet spot where the ladies might dry some of their garments, while some of the men-folk crossed over to Wandsworth to renew the keg. Arrived at the proposed end of their journey, they landed on a lawn and spread out their materials for a picnic, when lo, a game-keeper and his dog approached; the dog seized the goose, and upset all the other viands. When the owner of the house heard of the adventure, he behaved like a gentleman, received and treated the picnic party hospitably, and sent them back homeward in a joyous mood. On the return journey, however, they had yet another mishap; the boat upset in the mud at Blackfriars, when they were about to disembark.

Among public doings was the visit to this country of Omai or Omiah, a native of Otaheite, brought home by one of the South Sea Exploring Expeditions, which we associate with the names of

Cook, Solander, Banks, and Fourneaux. We are told that Omai was taken by Banks and Solander to Sadler's Wells Theatre, where he "appeared highly entertained." When introduced at court, he accosted the king with "How do you do?" one of the little bits of English he had learned. The Duchess of Gloucester, not being prepared with a present proper for him, it occurred to her that a pocket-handkerchief, embroidered with her coronet, might be acceptable to him. Omai immediately kissed the coronet, and made a low complaisant bow to the duchess. "As this mark of his attention, politeness, and quickness was unexpected, it gained him the good grace of all present."

Concerning food and its retailing, we find many jottings bearing much resemblance to those of the present day; while others present points of marked difference. One newspaper "Presented the compliments of the public to the milk-carriers, and hoped they would content themselves with the great price they charge for milk, which might be afforded genuine; and not impose further on the public, by calling in the Islington-road to christen their milk (as the phrase is) at certain pumps—a cruel cheat put upon all ranks of people, the poor especially." The assize of bread, for London, was fixed by the Lord Mayor, and was altered when any material change took place in the price of corn. This assize, which determined the weight, price, and quality of loaves of bread, was arranged in the autumn of 1774, in two forms. The weight of a penny loaf was prescribed, as well as of twopenny and threepenny loaves, in two kinds of bread, wheaten and household; while, for larger loaves, the weight and price were stated for the peck, the half peck, and the quarter peck. We need not give the figures in detail; suffice it to say that bread was a little cheaper then than it is now; a quartern wheaten loaf (heavier than our four-pound loaf by five or six ounces) was eight-pence. The word assize had a definite quantitative meaning; for we are told that, on one day in the middle of September, bread rose "half an assize," or one penny on the peck loaf. Meat appears to have been carried from the slaughter-houses to the butcher's shops in a fashion that incommoded the public: "Yesterday morning, the surveyor of the pavements, attended by some of the city constables, took into custody several of the fellows who are continually driving

their wheelbarrows along the foot pavement, laden with carcases." The ticket-porters, with an eye to their own interest, but a pretended sympathy for the public, complained of the wholesale fruiterers, who stored their fruit in their own cellars instead of bringing it to market and selling it at the market price. There was a taste at that time for marrow pudding; seeing we are told that "Sarah Dursley, the king's marrow-pudding maker, successor to the late Henry Dursley, begs leave to acquaint the nobility and gentry that she has begun making for the season in Swallow-street, facing St. James's church." Concerning fish, we find that a fishmonger, who chose to give himself the cognomen of Oystericus, sold oysters in Sherborne-lane, City; he moved to another house in the same street; and another person assumed the name of Oystericus at the old shop. The original dealer, annoyed at this, advertised that he would henceforth assume his real name, James Peto, and stamp that name on every barrel, and that "any oysters sent from my late warehouse will not come from me." His price for "Colchester natives" was three-and-sixpence per barrel, and for "exceeding fine Pyfleet" four-and-sixpence—prices which we now can only envy. One day the papers announced that "a salmon, weighing twenty-nine pounds, was caught yesterday in Hackney River," a local name for the River Lea, but we suspect there must have been a little exaggeration in the weight.

The streets and the houses occupied then, as they do now, a good deal of public attention, accompanied sometimes by animadversions in the newspapers. A correspondent estimated that there were "upwards of four thousand houses in and about this metropolis which ought to be pulled down immediately, to prevent their falling and doing mischief." There were some queer places around the spot now known as Farringdon-street. "On Wednesday evening, as an elderly man was going down Break-neck Stairs, at the top of Sea Coal-lane, Fleet Market, his foot slipped; he fell from top to bottom, and fractured his skull." And some of the houses had witnessed queer scenes. "As some carpenters were mending a garret floor in Bride-court, Fleet-street, they found the skeletons of two children between the rafters, supposed to have been murdered some years ago; the bones dropped to dust in moving them." In St. John's-

square two attorneys discussed the affairs of two clients, but did what attorneys rarely do—discussed with their walking-sticks when their tongues failed; they caned each other so severely that both were confined to their beds for a time. Near that spot, in Vine Street, Clerkenwell, one Mr. Taylor sold "the true quintessence of viper, the most noble and grand preparation in the whole materia medica, vastly preferable to any other preparation of vipers whatever, as being replete with the full and whole virtue of them. A few drops give great warmth, and exceedingly delight the vital and animal spirits, senses, and nerves." A few couriers sojourned occasionally in London then, as they do now: "Charles Dejean, courier from Geneva, will arrive here the latter end of the month, and gives notice that he shall go back a few days afterwards. Gentlemen or ladies wanting to travel to France, Italy, or Switzerland shall be served by him with good coaches and best usage on the road." Tourists, we may observe, were much more at the mercy of couriers and drivers than they are now in these railway days of ours.

One short paragraph lets us into the secret that even a hundred years ago London artisans talked about emigrating to better their condition. There was in Spitalfields an emigration society, to which each member paid sixpence per week. Three of the rules were, that all the members should emigrate to America when the accumulated fund was large enough; that none should go till all could go; and that if a member died in the interim, the benefit of his subscription should go to the surviving members of the society. We strongly suspect that the whole fund would be frittered away on such a plan as this.

OUR VILLAGE.

ALONG the old accustomed paths with musing steps
we go,
The green trees arch above our heads, and every
branch we know;
The meadow has its tale for us, the lane its storied
hour,
Companions in each hedge we hail, a friend in every
flower.

The headstones by the grassy graves bear old familiar
names,
Each, as we glance them idly o'er, its flash of
memory claims,
There, a sweet touch of pathos wakes, here, loving
laughter tells,
On some quaint long recorded trait, the roused re-
membrance dwells.

The little child that gazes up, with wide blue wistful eyes,
Unconscious of what charm for us in their soft lustrous
lies,
Will answer with her mother's smile, or in her
father's voice,
And in the accent to whose ring our hearts can still
rejoice.

The cottage doors are shut that ne'er closed to our
steps of yore,
Beside the evening hearth they talk of us and ours
no more,
Oh sad, and strange, and hard it seems, there are so
few to greet,
As slow and silently we trace the winding village
street!

Yet, half forgotten as we stand, amid the haunts of
youth,
The golden past asserts for us its strength of love
and truth,
Though other pathways woo us now, and other boons
may bless
The home that childhood's halo crowned claims sepa-
rate tenderness.

LEARNING TO COOK.

LESSON THE FOURTH.

ELOQUENTLY did Parisina demonstrate the fitness of her christening, when we assembled on that fourth day of our course, that brought us to the commencement of our cooking-proper.

"Impossible!" she cried, with real Parisian volubility and emphasis. "Nonsense! It can't be! It's absurd! How can that teach us how to cook? Sit and see Mrs. Born and the others do the things, just as if we were the public and had only come to hear? You must be wrong. It must be a mistake."

She was met by a most serene and solid smile. "It is true," were the slow words accompanying this, out of a half-shut mouth, topped by a pair of half-raised brows. "A friend of mine has told me. She has been through the course, and that's all that we shall do."

The informing pupil was so certain and so submissive, only shrugging her sober shoulders, and giving a shake of her good-looking head, that she ought to have brought satisfaction and assurance, but Parisina could not drill herself to the right credulity. From the shade of the corner where she stood, out came her vivid utterances again. "But we cleaned saucepans; we actually had to learn to clean saucepans. Surely we ought to learn to fry, to roast, to stew."

"I think so," agreed the informing pupil, in her sedate and unresisting way. "I don't see how we're to learn by only looking, and by not being allowed to do. But it is so. And so you'll find."

Parisina stopped short in the vehement pulling off of bonnet and summer caps. "Then we may as well keep our bonnets on," she cried. "And all our things, even to our gloves. Ah, yes, I see. Nobody is taking them off to-day. We are to go in and sit still, just as we are."

That was it. And when the summons came in a few moments, in the customary way, we went through the scullery into the kitchen, in our customary flock.

"It's very disappointing." This was a moan from Lady Lucy, who chose a moment to make it when narrowness of door and plenteousness of pupils caused a temporary block.

So it was. And so everybody seemed to feel. To be in out-door gear, and sit in seemly rows, might be grand, might be impressive; but it was sorry substitute for the action, and thought, and ingenuity, that had been (mentally) prepared for. To work had been our wish and, undoubtedly, expectation; it was tantalising to have mere talk presented to us. Besides, was it not obvious that a cookery-book could do that talk every bit as well—possibly, let it be mildly suggested, better. And was it quite to the spirit of the prospectus that practical cookery should dwindle down to a mere sight of it? Undoubtedly, pupils, on becoming pupils, thought they would have to wash vegetables, to prepare vegetables, to ascertain from their own knowledge when vegetables were exactly boiled. Pupils expected to be taught how to make pastry, to bake pastry, to practise the particular deftness without which pastry is as naught. Pupils thought to have their own portion of steak, say, assigned to them, which they were to broil, to braize, to fry, or stew, or roast, or simmer; to treat with the art that cooks are cunning in, and that each pupil was earnest to be cunning in as well. And now, pupils, with protest smothered, were to pass on, one by one, sheep-like, through an opening at one end of the long table or counter; they were to be seated, they were positively to remain seated, in class, just as the morning lunch-cake class had been seen seated; and we did pass on, and we did sit, waiting patiently and respectfully for the name of the dishes that were to be shown, for the calling out of the ingredients to be used in them, for the sight of other women cooking them, when we certainly had supposed we were going to do the cooking ourselves. How Parisina managed to keep her tongue quiet was a wonder.

At the outset, the two gas-stoves were clear before the pupil's eyes. They looked curiously familiar. Had not each pupil ground away, with her own fingers, at those bright steel bars, under the sour instruction of Mistress Tart? Ay, and there they were now, the pair of them, for pupils to choose from and sit by, according to each pupil's fancy. At one stood Mistress Tart, with the gentle Mrs. Sweetman, at her left elbow, as her qualified assistant; at the other presided the competent Mrs. Born, with Mrs. Cookett for her pleasant vice. At one stove a certain something would be shown, at the other a certain something else. Sometimes the delineations succeeded each other; sometimes the delineations were carried on, distractingly, at once. A list of the principal dishes shown during the course will be the best proof of the cooks' powers and responsibilities. They were not simple dishes, for simple people, in simple circumstances. They were not nicely-calculated experiments of how to make available "scraps," and cuttings, and underdone edges, and crusts and crumbs, and unsymmetrical portions of "left" pies and puddings. They were rich and dainty recipes for aspic jelly; for Charlotte Russe; for *bonne femme* soup; for braized sweetbread; for quenelles of veal; for croquettes of mutton; for Genoese pastry; for Vanilla soufflé; for strawberry cream; for mayonnaise of salmon; for omelettes; for chicken panado; for any entrée, nearly, that could be thought of, to tempt a blasé gourmand, who had no shred of appetite left to him, and who yet had a cook and a cupboard, full, both of them, of dexterity and rich materials, up to the costly brim.

"Can't make good things, unless you've got good materials," cried Mistress Tart, candidly.

Supporting Mistress Tart's assertion, showing the genuine truth of it, was the expensive and extensive array of cook-furniture for each pair of cooks. They had pastry boards, kitchen knives (knives with blades almost triangular, they were so finely tipped), steels for sharpening these still sharper, wooden spoons, rollers, vegetable-dishes, graters, scales, basins, plates, strainers, skimmers, gill-measures, cups, baking-tins, pestles and mortars, sugar-dusters, china apparatus for whisking eggs or cream, the cream, the eggs, pepper, salt, flour, parsley, butter, sieves, larding-needles, tin-cutters in an (apparently) interminable coil, sheets of clean

white paper, string, ham, mushrooms, veal, stock, water, jelly-moulds, ice-moulds, pudding-moulds, stew-pans, gallipots, vinegar, lettuces, carrot, skewers, dripping, pepper, ice, grated cheese, lemons, jam, milk, preserved cherries, tarragon, chervil, angelica, cucumber, mint—inextricable outlay, bewilderment, puzzling complexity, wild and embarrassing confusion! In the midst of it, no longer was each action accurate and distinct; no longer could true record be kept of it. To whisk eggs, was to whisk eggs; to whip cream, was to whip cream; to slice a carrot, remained the slicing of a carrot; so the acts of shredding herbs and mushrooms, of decorating jellies, of grating cheese, of mincing meat, of "cutting" beetroot, of squeezing lemons, of straining soups, continued to be those said and separate acts, and could have been undertaken by any prentice-hand present, had the way been shown, and the opportunity been fairly given. But whether the chopped parsley was for the quenelles, the croquettes, or the grenadines; whether the clarified butter was for a bain-marie, or a braize; whether the pounded sugar was to weigh an ounce or a pound; the gill of cream to be added at one stage of progress or at another farther on, there could be no remembrance, without application to hurried notes, the very making of which interfered with observation, and caused much unnecessary labour, seeing that similar recipes were down in cookery-books, and that similar recipes had been down in cookery-books, edition after edition, ever since the demand for cookery-books began. In short, the ten or a dozen lessons, given by the assembly of cooks, involving from fifty to one hundred recipes, became fused, mixed, disorganised, compounded; even as the articles in the list of cook-furniture belonged in part to one day and in part to a next, even as their incoherent and chaotic mingling may amply testify.

But the quartette of cooks knew what they were about, and they "muddled" nothing. They did all they had to do, skilfully, scientifically, swiftly. They turned out dishes as exact and elegant as if they had been bought at the most *recherché* confectioner's; they held them up for admiration; they made known, in proper commercial spirit, that straightway they might be sold.

"Has anybody ordered these quenelles

of veal?" was one method of giving this information.

It made the ladies look at one another, with well-bred intention not to step in where another wished. It brought a pause, too, to let the look go round. Out of it, at last, one lady ventured, all apology and timidity,

"If nobody else wants it, may I have it, please?"

Oh yes, sharply enough, the lady might, and the lady's price would be two shillings, quickly handed over and quickly taken.

"Who's going to buy that? If anybody is going to buy that, please speak," were other cries. And "Who wants sponge-cakes? they're a penny apiece."

"Pots of strawberry jam!" was the cry on another occasion, too, the crier being, as it chanced, the lady-in-charge herself. "All are sold but ten. There are only ten left. A shilling each is the price. Will you have one? Yes, that's one; two; three; four; five. Now, only five left. They're very good. You've seen them made. Six; seven; eight. Only two now. Nine; ten. Ah, now they're all gone, nicely."

It was a small auction, and done in pleasantness and smiling; but it was scarcely what would have been looked for in a cooking-school. As a companion picture was the sale of creams, of jellies, of brown-bread puddings (all quickly packed and handed over, with strict injunctions to bring back the cloths and dishes); was the sale of iced coffee, of iced fruit-juice and water, cleverly brought in when the thermometer was at the highest, and when there was a lull in active doing, while some special subject was let to simmer. Of the same order, too, was the quick pounce down upon a pupil, who asked the difference between a dish being cooked, and another closely allied to it. She should be shown, she was told politely; the two dishes being composed of the same ingredients (which were ready and to spare), only differently treated. The pupil looked on whilst she was being shown, considerably interested. The pupil, when the showing was done, expressed her thanks and her complete satisfaction.

"Oh, but you must buy it," cried the plump cook, who happened to be overlooking. "It was made for you, and you must pay for it."

The price was trifling—only two or three pence; but the tendency was to

check enquiry from pupils of modest minds, and to cause such to go away ignorant, rather than add in this manner to their instruction fees. Another matter involving transfer of coin of the realm was the making of omelettes and soufflés. Pupils were allowed, in good faith, to practise these. At a convenient time (a few minutes before the expiration of the two hours' lesson) pupils were invited to imitate the expert actions of the expert demonstrators—if they chose to pay for the materials.

"Now, any of you ladies like to make an omelette? You can if you like, you know. And they're very easy."

Mistress Tart was the lively intimator; and Mistress Tart's intimation brought the courage of four out of the score or so of pupils up to the sticking-place. Among them, amazingly, was her highness the calm princess. Her dark silk rustled as she swept through the opening at the end of the table, her ruffles fell over her waxen fingers, her tulle veil shrouded her unmoved and waxen face.

"Beat it so, my lady," said the gentle Mrs. Sweetman, in her mellow tones. "Not that way, my lady, but like this."

Mrs. Sweetman was assiduous, the princess smooth. But the princess, with only her finger-tips unfettered, with her veil still down, with her sweeping skirts keeping her from fit approach to the frying-pan and gas-stove, made manifest her supreme and superb unuse. A certain knack was wanted to half-turn the cooking omelette, to quite turn the emptying pan. Calm as ever, placid, waxen, the princess aimed at the knack, serenely (mis)understanding it, the princess tried to do the turning—wrong.

"The other way, my lady," swam in Mrs. Sweetman's suave interposition. "If you please, my lady, like this; not so."

The princess tried again, unmoved, unshaken. The princess had no variety in her waxen smile. Her materials were free of the pan at last; they slid before her (and us) upon a plate. Unflatteringly she took the price of her performance (a few pence) from her purse; she paid it; she was making her retirement placidly, with her silks, with her ruffles, with her falling veil.

"Won't you taste it, my lady?" suggested Mrs. Sweetman, stopping her.

"Won't you like to see what it's like?"

There was a momentary raising of those long fringed eyelids that were one item of

her loveliness; there was a calm fixed look at her handiwork upon the plate. "No," she calmly decided, serenely self-possessed and unperturbed. "No, thank you; I would rather not."

And everybody else would rather not—to a dead certainty. Our princess, from a cooking point of view, was undoubtedly a failure.

It must not be supposed that all questions about dishes doing, and dishes wanted to be done, were followed by a demand for payment. That was not the case. Enquiries were freely allowed; and to blurt, straight out, the shallow wonders that rose to the surface, seemed to be looked upon by some of the pupils as their best prerogative. Occasionally, the feebleness of our questions rubbed Mistress Tart's feathers the wrong way, terribly.

"Do you put more water to more calves' feet?" asked one too-thoughtless pupil, at the end of the enumeration of the materials for making calves' foot jelly.

Mrs. Born was the instructress; and Mrs. Born paused, with her kitchen-knife upright, and her eye-brows a good deal uprighter. "You always get in a muddle over the four feet!" she cried; as though we were the same pupils before whom she had operated a fortnight before. And then she flung out, with a flash from her fine eyes, and a resumption of her work, "Multiply your feet, you must multiply your pints! of course!"

"How shall I know when it boils?" was another sage query. And "Is it frying when it begins to hiss? And do you turn it every time it hisses?" And "How long does it take to boil an egg hard, please?" And, "In making spring soup, supposing you hav'n't any green peas, what would you do?"

This last was just one of the questions that brought out a characteristic answer. It was Mrs. Born's character; for the soup enquired about was Mrs. Born's achievement.

"No green peas?" she cried, presenting the difficulty to herself again. "Why, you wouldn't make the soup!" was her way of getting over it. "For," she explained, "Bonne Fem, or Bonne Farm, soup, whichever you like to call it, I don't know, is a spring dish, and you only make it when you know you can get peas!"

Another point was made over the closing of an oven door. Mistress Tart had made

something before us at the table, and then turned away and popped it in the oven, shutting it in with a sharp clang. "Dear me!" cried a thin-voiced pupil, all in mystification, "oughtn't you to leave the oven door open? They told us so this morning!"

Mistress Tart opened her mouth as well as her eyes. "Open! They told you so! Oh!" with recovery. "That's their way! Different cooks has different ways, you know. And I daresay one way is as good as another. But this is mine."

And, "How do you spell soufflée?" came out once, in agony from an excited pupil. "Is there only one f? And ought it to be accented?" "How do you spell baste?" was a trouble likewise; and some of the implements used were almost a terror, they caused so much wonder and trepidation.

"What is that little implement, please?" asked a very nervous lady. "Will you tell me the name of it?"

Mrs. Sweetman gave her the name of the dish she was preparing; gave her the name of the ingredient under manipulation; the name of almost everything before her, in her anxiety to give the information asked for.

"No;" the very nervous lady answered, several times. "No. The—implement you are using, please. What is the name of that implement you are using?"

Mrs. Sweetman was brought round to proper comprehension at last. "Oh yes, my lady, I beg pardon. It's a banmurry, my lady."

The very nervous lady was flung to the earth. In what was she a wit wiser than before? All the attention and contention would have to be gone through again.

"I—I—beg pardon. I—didn't hear. A—a—what?"

"Banmurry, my lady," replied Mrs. Sweetman, unconscious of any stumbling-block, and going on with her preparation.

The nervous lady was in despair. "A—a—what? I—I—beg pardon. I—really cannot hear!"

She was relieved by a near pupil, of quicker ear, and more culinary acquaintance. "A bain marie, it is," said the pupil. "The French bain marie, you know."

"Yes, yes, yes," cried the nervous lady, in a profusion of thanks; in the midst of which she applied herself to her notes,

diligently. For, there never could have been such a class for anxiety and attention, in any branch of knowledge ever taught anywhere. An instant note was made of everything; and the smallest details, it was supposed, could be settled with the most minute accuracy, an accuracy from which nothing could warrant the least departure.

"How many of the savoy biscuits do you put round the mould?" was an earnest enquiry about ladies-fingers, stuck inside a kind of copper crown for a Charlotte Russe. And the pupil's face was as earnest as her tongue, and her pencil was down, ready for the noting.

Mistress Tart was not touched a bit by her pupil's attentive eagerness. "How many biscuits?" was her cry, in great contempt. "How many biscuits round the mould? Why, as many as will go round your mould, of course."

Evidently. And it is no wonder the little teacher blew and blustered, for she was whipping cream that wouldn't whip, and to have to cease her whirling, to answer such a question, was abundant provocation. The little teacher had a heart, however, and she soon made her apology.

"It's the cream," she cried. "It won't whip, this hot weather. I feel so cross about it, I could cry."

"Now, please," she appealed, on another occasion, being fearful of similar interruption, "I do hope you'll pay attention. It's so hot, you see, I scarcely dare bring the paste into this hot kitchen at all. It ought to be on ice all the time. I dare scarcely put my hands to it."

And yet, poor soul, after she had mixed her paste lugging in a heavy ice-pan to show us, and lugging it out again, and putting the paste in fairy tins into the oven, and waiting the necessary minutes for the baking, when she drew her baking-tin out again, most of her tarts were burnt.

"Look here," she cried, as each of her fellow-cooks drew near. "Look here. Burnt up."

She was sure of sympathy. It was a contretemps to which the most professed of her race were liable. And a low oh! of commiseration rose around her, and brought her the beginning of consolation.

"That's it," she turned to us and complained, with her hands out-strewn. "It's that that makes cooks so bad-tempered. A bad oven spoils everything."

It was her defence, her justification; and she obtained acquittal.

There was humour in the young woman to help to this. It came out, one lesson, over duck. Roast duck. We had seen it cleaned and trussed, and we were seeing it hung upon the jack. "There," cried Mistress Tart, coming back from the background of range and screen to face us, "roast half an hour, if it's a lady, twenty minutes if it's a gentleman."

We all looked at her, and at one another, in a maze.

"Lady half-an-hour, gentleman twenty minutes," repeated Mistress Tart, thinking we were "muddling."

One lady summoned courage enough to ask for explanation. "Do you mean the duck?" she said, with painful diffidence, scarcely liking to raise her eyes.

Mistress Tart's amusement rolled out in a small explosion. "No!" she laughed. "It's who it's for. Ladies like everything dry, done to a chip. Gentlemen's more sensible, they like the flavour and the gravy in it."

Amidst more laughter, the times were written down. On the conclusion of her writing, one lady noticed a fact in connection with the duck conventional, that had been omitted from this duck under discussion. "You didn't say anything, Mistress Tart," she observed, "about the stuffing. What are the ducks to be stuffed with, please?"

"Oh!" cried Mistress Tart, her best culinary professorialness greatly agitated; "you don't stuff ducks now, it's vulgar."

The pupil was not abashed, or beaten out of her position. She was a married pupil, evidently, with a husband prone to scold and grumble if dishes were not served up exactly to his liking, and since she had the wifely wish to please him, she made her demand again.

"But some gentlemen—mine, I know—wouldn't care for duck without stuffing," she persisted. "I shouldn't dare to send duck up plain."

"Ah," conceded Mistress Tart, her concession planting her firmly on two landing places, "that's supposing it is the only dish. Stuff it then, of course, just as you would ordinary. But stuff duck for a second course? Oh no, never."

It must be observed, also, that Mistress Tart had her pets. One young pupil, plain, but very pleasant, and eminently persevering, held her heart tightly.

"Here," she said to her, one day, about the list of ingredients for a dish, "You read it over to them."—The pupils were always them obliquely or accusatively with Mistress Tart.—"You've got it down right I know; I saw you. And some of them have come in so late, they won't know anything about it."

The young girl's notes were really correct, and with a flush of pleasure she read them for the benefit of her co-learners.

"Ah," commended Mistress Tart, "you'll pass the examination, I know. Here, you may come round, if you like, and scrape these new potatoes."

It came rather overpoweringly, open reward as it was evidently meant to be. But the young girl overcame her dislike to the unusual prominence, and left us to stand at Mistress Tart's side.

Another method of Mistress Tart's deserves recording. It was the attitude she nearly always assumed, when we first entered the kitchen, in sheep-file, to take our seats; and one of the days on which she indulged in it shall be taken as an example.

We found her at her gas-stove, on guard over her pile of preparations; with her clean check duster tucked into her band for emergencies; with her hands resting upon the table; with her head high. As we chose our seats, she raised her eyebrows, screwed up her shrewish mouth, looked at the clock. It caused sharp expectancy. It caused every pencil to be at every note-book, prompt to take down her speech. At the right hour, as we knew, the first word would fall from her; at that identical hour the first word must be written down; if it were missed, then the next would come, and the first would have run down the river, never to be retrieved. What was the name of what was coming? we asked of one another, timidly. Could we get that much ascertained, that much might be written down, and the start be fairer. But none of us knew. None of us were bold enough even to venture to think we knew. In our extremity, the question was put direct, at last, to Mistress Tart. Very modestly; with much fear of being too pronounced.

"May we ask, please, what you are going to do? Will you tell us?"

Yes. To tell was not against Mistress Tart's humour. Mistress Tart did tell; with her head high; with her mouth screwed; with her eyes firm upon the clock.

"Sponge-cakes."

Sponge-cakes was swiftly written down in every note-book present, with every head bent low to do it.

Then there was a pause. Containing more sharp expectancy; more impervious importance from Mistress Tart, who might not be going to do anything at all, so still and silent was she. The extremity had come again. There must be put another question. It should be with the same timidity, with that same fear it might be too bold a step.

"And will you tell us, please, what Mrs. Born is going to do? At her end, at the other stove? Do you know?"

Yes. Mistress Tart knew—as she knew most things. And Mistress Tart would tell. And Mistress Tart, as before, did tell; with equal brevity.

"Cabinet-pudding."

There was commotion; a start; a stir. Should we stay for sponge cakes, or should we run for front places to Mrs. Born's cabinet pudding? The thing could not be decided without a flush and flutter. Sponge-cakes, it was instantly recollected, could be bought at a penny each (or at so much a pound, larger); cabinet-pudding was a pudding, and might be consistent, some time, with a special company dinner. Which should it be? Eventually, seats were taken again, and eyes fixed upon Mistress Tart. Reflection taught us that Mistress Tart must be going to exhibit first, since Mistress Tart was present, and Mrs. Born not yet come; at any rate, it was not well to lose a good place, unless it could be shown that there was strict need. One way of settling this point of need, was by putting one more timid question. It was put—falteringly.

"Which will begin first, please, Mistress Tart? You, or Mrs. Born?"

But that was a question that Mistress Tart had no thought of answering.

"Can't say yet," said Mistress Tart; with her eyes up to the roof; with her neat neck adjusting itself in her neat linen collar.

So we could simply sit, waiting. We saw Mistress Tart look round, towards the door through which Mrs. Born would come. We saw Mistress Tart look round again. We saw Mistress Tart move her skilful hands, and aggravatingly take the lid off a simmering stew-pan. We were on our feet again in a moment, craning our necks, to get a glimpse of what was

imprisoned within. It was only our fate to see Mistress Tart peep, and peep again, give an apparent verdict, and—put the lid on again, without telling us a word!

Questions rushed in a full flood, then. "Please," began one pupil. "What is," commenced another. And "Is that—?" "Have you—?" "May we—?" from some of the rest; whilst the princess enthroned herself back in her chair again, in the midst of her rustling silk, Modesta smiled, and Parisina bristled.

The entrance of Mrs. Born cut off any remainder.

That clever dignitary walked clear up to her gas-stove, meaning business, straight. "Cabinet pudding," she called out, in her stately voice.

And, helter-skelter, up and down, swiftly, instantly, we were scrambling amongst the chairs, threading in and out of them, knocking some over, being knocked over by some ourselves; and there we were in a second, like pigeons upon rails, in a new roosting-place, intent upon Mrs. Born.

SAFELY MARRIED.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "AN EXPERIENCE," "DAISY'S TRIALS," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHEN I unwillingly re-entered the house—unwillingly because of the exquisiteness of the evening, with all the spring flower and shrub scents in first freshness, and even the young leaves giving forth an unspeakably good odour—I went to see how poor Angela was getting on. I stayed by her bedside chatting, it might have been ten minutes, it might have been twenty. I daresay most of those knowing me, hearing me say that, would exclaim, "It's safe to have been at least twenty then."

It was only just as I was leaving the room—Dr. Carruthers had said that Angela was not to be encouraged to talk, that the quieter she was the better; and I had not meant to stay even five minutes—only just as I was leaving the room that I chanced to mention that Elsie was out, and on what errand. Angela immediately looked troubled, and the learning that Elsie was not alone, that Hannah was with her, only partly reassured her.

"Lying here idle all day has made me fidgetty and fanciful, perhaps," she said.

"I shall not feel quite at ease till I know darling Elsie is safe home."

"What can there be to fear, Angela, my love, with Mr. Ramsay in town?"

"How do we know he really is in town? I can't get the idea out of my mind that if he is really gone, he only went openly to return secretly; that he is plotting something against Elsie."

"Well, my dear, any way Elsie is safe just now with Hannah," I answered, soothing, as I thought, a mere feverish fancy.

Angela made me no reply, but her head moved restlessly on her pillow, and her face had flushed.

"You are more feverish this evening, my dear," I told her.

"Would you please send Nicholas to come home with Elsie and Hannah? Forgive me if I seem foolishly fearful, and if I am troublesome."

I kissed her, promised to do as she wished, and then I left her. I rang the drawing-room bell, which there was only, as it happened, Markham who lived in a sort of dignified retirement at my cottage, just waiting to see "if Mrs. Braithwait would ever want her again"—only Markham to answer.

To her I gave the order for Nicholas to go to Comfort Wakefield's cottage, to accompany Mrs. Braithwait and Hannah home. Markham kindly waited to light my lamp and draw down the blinds, before she did my bidding; then, at the same time that she announced that Nicholas was not to be found, was gone, she believed, to the village, she ushered in a visitor whom, as she was looking round outdoors for Nicholas, she had seen come up to the garden gate. That visitor was Mr. Brock.

Directly I saw the dear old man's face (old man I always call him, and yet he is, I daresay, a good fifteen years my junior), the working of his mouth, the twinkling of his eyes—saw these and felt the grasp of his hand, I cried out, sinking down on my couch, shaking all over with excitement,

"Allan Braithwait is alive, is well, is come home again!"

"He is alive, is in the neighbourhood; as to well— He has been a long time at death's door, and he does not yet look safe to stay this side of the threshold."

That, as it was meant to do, somewhat sobered and steadied me. I learnt from Mr. Brock that Allan, either through the

restlessness caused by disease, or from some foreboding reluctance, without more preparation, to encounter all the risks and chances of a long voyage, had left the North Star after the first few days of her voyage.

The doing this—getting one evening into a small boat to be rowed towards the dizzy distant dancing lights of a harbour—was the last voluntary action, on the other side of a great gap, of which he had any memory.

Whether he was the victim immediately after of intentional violence or of violent accident, or only of acute illness of mind and body, he had no means whatever of determining.

There were marks of violence about him, and neither money nor papers, nor any kind of clue to his identity could be heard of as having been discovered upon him, when by-and-by, by good Samaritans indeed, the poor, poor fellow was rescued from the hell upon earth in which he found himself when the first gleam of reason returned to him, this hell upon earth being the madhouse of a small southern French seaport town.

He remembered leaving the ship, he could recal a sort of horrid consciousness of the madhouse, and he remembered, too, in blessed contrast with those other memories, the first awakening to find all about him pure and sweet and white and still, when he had exchanged the fetid atmosphere of the place in which every sense became an avenue of outrage, for the good Samaritan's fair house among the vines, and the gentlest ministrations of the mistress and servant, its two inhabitants. Those things he remembered and for a long time nothing more. His mind, he said, seemed to him like a long dark tunnel, down into which the daylight of memory only penetrated faintly through few and wide-apart shafts.

I should think this must have been all I heard about Allan's past from Mr. Brock that day—indeed, perhaps, it may be more than I heard that day—the rest, of course, I must have heard from the poor ghost of his former self who, so soon after, was for a short time among us again.

Not wishing to return to this part of my story (nor, indeed, to any part of it, for I am growing weary), I will here briefly put down a few of the facts I learnt later, and will indicate a few of the pictures that were painted on my mind by what I was told.

The good Samaritan, by whom Allan had been rescued, was the mayor of the little town, a sort of Jean Valjean, for whom, to hear from his friend the doctor, of the "mad English gentleman" lying in durance vile, his malady disastrously aggravated by the nature of his surroundings, was to resolve immediately to release and remove him. And so Allan had been released and removed and brought to the white house among the vines, to be cared for by his host's old sister and her old servant.

The pictures painted on my mind by what Allan told me of his memories after that first waking in the fair and quiet house among the vines were all pleasant pictures. Of what he saw, for instance, lying on his bed; looking past the gold and white and green of lemon and orange trees to the blue sea and the blue mountains.

No doubt he was right in saying that, at a time when he could not yet be sure of his own identity, the strangeness and the newness of all his surroundings was a help and a source of health to him, helping him to refrain from all harming effort to understand the past, through his feeble placidity of content with that pleasant refreshing strangeness of the present. A pleasant present in which all was pure peace and sweet stillness, and, or so it seemed to him in looking back, always sunshine, and in which he found it occupation enough to watch the lengthening of her strip of work and lessening of her ball of wool, as, hour after hour, Mademoiselle Mathurine sat knitting by his window; or to try and count (but this, he said, often over-fatigued him) how many oranges were yellow, how many still green, on the tree close to that window; or to speculate, hearing the old servant's sabots clatter and her saucepans rattle in the little red-tiled kitchen, of the immaculate cleanliness of which an open door had now and then given him a glimpse, whether it would be her strong broth or delicious chocolate, her lait-de-poule, or arrow-root, with good red wine, which, by-and-by, leaving her sabots on his threshold, she would softly steal in to give him; or to watch, morning and evening, for the appearance on a particular bit of hill-side-road, visible from his bed, of a little red-skirted, silver-laced, black-bodied, snow-sleeved, and chemisetted bergère, leading out or bringing home her troop of goats; or to see at sunset the brown shepherd with his brown

sheep in an atmosphere of goldy-brown, made up of dust and sunbeams, pass between the fern-fringed walls of the lane at the foot of the vineyard. And then, when the out-door world, too bright and too far off, fatigued him, to let his eyes return and rest upon Mademoiselle Mathurine, to wonder about her life in the past, and what she thought of in the present, sitting knitting there, and whether any creature had ever been paler than she was and thinner and still alive; tired at last even of that gentle wondering, to watch the play of light and shadow on the wall, when the low sun flashed upon a little sparkling fountain in the garden, and then, dazzled, to close his eyes and sleep. For days, for weeks, for months, it was such a life as this with which he was content. The wise doctor put his best hopes, under Providence, of a perfect cure, in the gradual working upon him of the wholesome influences of the place, of quiet, and of kindness, of good air and of good food.

By-and-by, about the time of the vintage, when the days were already short, and when almost all the talk he heard bore directly or indirectly on the great subjects of casks and crops and yield, he was every evening carried into the little salon, to lie and watch the evening game of tric-trac between the doctor and the mayor. Then, by-and-by, again, after a long interval, leaning on a stick and on the arm either of Mademoiselle Mathurine or of the old servant, one of whom would shelter his head from the early spring sun with a great white umbrella, he would saunter up and down out-doors.

And so, gradually, were healed the scars on mind and body of much that he had gone through; but still memory delayed to return, and any effort to force its return did mischief. It seemed as if, in coming to himself, he had found the mansion of his mind so swept and garnished that all old land-marks had been swept away, and he, wandering through the empty chambers, had the effect of being to himself both haunted house and haunting spirit. At length there reached him, in some marvellous round-about way, the story of which might in itself be worth telling by anyone with energy to tell it, an old English newspaper in which he saw himself urgently advertised for by Messrs. Brock and Greenstreet. The familiar names brought almost everything back to him, as by a flash.

What happened after, the caution with which, at first, he got his friend the doctor to communicate with Mr. Brock, the meeting between them, when Mr. Brock came and did not at once and undoubtingly recognise Allan, the parting with his friends at the fair white house, under promise soon to return, and not without some hint of the scheme which was already forming itself in his mind, all this it would be tedious to tell in detail.

"And you kept me all this time without a word," I cried to Mr. Brock reproachfully, when he had told me not, of course, all this or half of it, but all he had to tell.

"There was too much to tell in a letter, and I have been so incessantly occupied. You must be prepared to find Mr. Braithwait fearfully changed, so much so that, had not his memory come back, he would have had little chance as a claimant whose identity anyone chose to dispute."

"One thing, you dear good man, you don't tell me, where is he now?" Mr. Brock drew out his great gold repeater and put it close to the lamp. "I must be going to join him," he said, "you, too, have work to do in preparing Mrs. Braithwait."

"But where is he now?"

"I left him at his own house, waiting for his cousin. As to the result of that interview I am somewhat anxious. He is by no means strong enough for so much excitement and fatigue as he has undertaken, and he was most unwise, I think, in insisting on meeting Ramsay to-day and alone."

"You may be easy about any such meeting. It cannot come off to-day. Mr. Ramsay is not at present at Braithwait, but in town."

"Excuse me, he returned to Braithwait this morning, having travelled by the night mail."

"You are sure, quite sure?"

"Certainly. But why such alarm? You don't surely fear that Ramsay would use violence?"

"Indeed I do. My poor, poor little Elsie!" And, as coherently as I could, I told Mr. Brock of what I feared. I could see that he shared my alarm, though he ridiculed it. He caught up his hat and hurried away, after receiving particular instructions as to the direction in which lay the cottage to which Elsie had been summoned.

Once again, "what a thing it is to be old," I moaned, as I recognised that I

could do nothing but only wait. I would not even go up to Angela. Not wishing further to fever her with my excitements, my uncertainties, my fears. From the position of her room it was by no means necessary that she should have heard me in conversation with Mr. Brock.

For the great mercy shown us, of which I had just heard, I hope I was not at the time, and in my heart, as thankless as it seems to me to sound as if I had been, in the way it is here put down. But the shadow of a fear, looming all the larger for its vagueness, as to what fate, or even fright—for indeed she seemed as if mere fright might suffice to kill her—had overtaken poor little helpless Elsie, had so soon darkened my joy that I had barely had time to recognise it as joy.

CHAPTER XXXII. AND LAST.

WHAT farther I have to tell was told to me piecemeal, and, in the first instance, in so hurried and confused a way, and when I myself was so much under the influence of varying anxieties and excitements, that it was only after hearing it more than once, and thinking about it a good deal, that I could understand the sequence of it enough to set it down "decently and in order."

Hannah says—but this may be nothing but the presentiment and prophecy after the fact, to which the uneducated (perhaps, not only the uneducated) are addicted—Hannah says that besides that curious creepiness which came over her as she followed Mrs. Braithwait into the wood, she had quite a fright when very near the middle of it.

Very near the middle of this wood two paths, coming from opposite directions (one being the short footway from Braithwait, the other coming from the coach-road which connects our market town with York), both end in what may be called the main path, the one Elsie and Hannah were pursuing. It was just here that Hannah, turning sharply round at some stirring and rustling among the branches, too considerable, she thought, to be made by bird or squirrel (I don't know, by-the-bye, that I ever heard of a squirrel among larches), fancied that she saw a man disappear quickly, as if hiding behind a tree. She easily, however, persuaded herself she was mistaken, said nothing of this to Mrs. Braithwait, and, indeed, forgot all about it, till what was to happen afterwards had happened.

When they got clear of the wood and could see a good stretch along the coach-road, they noticed a two-horse carriage, drawn up close to the hedge-side, near a gate which opened on the wood.

"Townspople come a-primrosing," had commented Hannah. "Late for that, too; perhaps it's May lilies they're after."

It seems very stupid of Hannah not to have connected this waiting carriage with her fancy of a man in hiding in the wood, and not to have hindered Mrs. Braithwait from putting herself into such peril as she did almost immediately afterwards. It seems very stupid, I own; but there, I might have done just the same myself. A salutary reflection this to make, I often think, when we are inclined to abuse others angrily for stupidity.

They got quite safely to Comfort Wakefield's cottage; but, when they reached it, poor Comfort seemed surprised to see them, surprised, though yet more glad than surprised, hailing their timely visit as "a special Providence." This, again, might have made Hannah think, instead of only drawing from her the sharp remark, that she didn't know if it would be most good or bad for people, if special Providences were made so cheap as that they could be had for asking.

It's no great wonder, however, that no such explanation as might have brought out the fact that Comfort herself had sent no message to us, therefore had not asked for this special Providence, took place; for the poor baby was judged by Hannah to be really dying, the mother was worn out and at her wit's-end, and Hannah, as a last hope, set about preparing a hot bath, telling Comfort, meanwhile, to try if she could get the child to swallow a few drops of brandy.

Then it appeared that there was no brandy in the house.

On hearing this, poor little frail Elsie, who had been feeling sorrowfully useless, in the face of this sorrow, thought, "here is something, at all events, that I can do!" and before Hannah had time enough to recollect herself so far as to remonstrate (and if she had done this Elsie, who was now as docile to all authority and influence as she had formerly been restive and elusive of all, would have stayed) Elsie had left the cottage.

The sun had by this time set. In the wood it already seemed quite dusk. Elsie vaguely wondered, as she hurried on, what could keep that carriage still waiting there, by

the road-side, now it was so late—too late, too dark, for finding lilies.

Elfie was not strong enough to be able long to keep up the pace at which she had started: she was soon forced to pause for breath, and, leaning against a tree, to wait for the heavy hurried beating of her heart to quiet down.

I must be a little angry with Hannah, though I might have done the same thing myself, for if I had, should I not then have been very angry with myself? as I realize the peril of that fair frail child as she passed through the wood that evening. Resting there, she began, she says, to think about the stories told of things that had happened in that wood, and to feel frightened. I chose to believe her then conscious, without knowing that she was so, of the closeness of an evil presence. Suddenly, she says, the course of her thoughts changed, she ceased to be frightened, she found herself thinking of her husband, so vividly, and so longingly, that before she knew it she had spoken his name.

Then, her breath having come back to her, remembering the need of the poor little child, she again hurried onward. She was now about the middle of the wood—the way seemed strangely long, and the wood strangely dark—and suddenly, stepping from behind a tree, right into her path, barring her progress with outstretched arms, which only closed to close upon her, breaking into passionate speech, made up of threats and promises, of triumph and of entreaty, there stood before this lonely frail creature, whom we had been warned it would need so little to kill, the man she equally feared and hated—Edgar Ramsay!

I was wrong in even having fancied he had even pity for her, much less love! Poor Elfie! of what immediately followed she could give but small account. It flashed upon her at once, she said, what the waiting carriage meant. Also the utter, the awful loneliness of that wood. The nearest habitations were the cottages, Comfort Wakefield's cottage and mine, between which she had been coming and going. And she was as nothing in that bad man's grasp.

Had I been in my garden I should, probably, in the soft stillness of the May evening, have heard Elfie's cries and screams—to my distressed alarm, and nothing to the poor child's help. But at this time, with closed doors and windows,

I was, doubtless, with all my senses intent on what I was hearing, listening to Mr. Brock.

Elfie remembers one more thing distinctly—that in her helpless agony, and under the influence of the vivid thoughts of him with which she had so lately been filled, she cried out for help from "Allan," "Husband!" And then, as something pressed over her face, stifled her, and she lost consciousness, she had as a last sensation a great crash, a fall of something somewhere, which either fell on her or took her with it in its fall.

When Elfie after that crash was again conscious, she thought she was already dead and in heaven. She was being carried along, as it seemed to her, close under the stars, with the wind of heaven blowing in her face. She knew beyond all doubt that the arms in which she lay were Allan's, were her husband's; and how and where, except in heaven, could she be in his arms?

Her sigh against his cheek of soft and deep content was the first sign he had she was not dead.

Allan Braithwait had, it seems, grown tired of waiting at Braithwait for his cousin. About his cousin's absence there appeared to be some mystery, all the confused and frightened servants professing ignorance both as to where he was, and when he was likely to return.

Tired of waiting, he had been drawn on and on almost against his own will towards my cottage. Near the middle of the larch wood he had sat down on a felled tree trunk to rest. This must have been after Elfie's first passage through the wood.

Resting here some time quite motionless, he became presently aware that he was not the only human being in the wood, and by-and-by, himself unseen and his presence as unsuspected as that of any other dead man, he became further aware that it was his cousin, for whom he had tired of waiting at Braithwait, who was lurking here near him.

Why was he lurking here?

This question had not long waited for its answer.

One can imagine at least something of the momentary shock and the apparent wreck of all new hope, making the weakened brain reel, which poor Allan must have suffered, when a figure too light, too slight, to all way fairy-like, to be the figure of any but Elfie, his wife, of

whom he had been taught to think with a fresh tenderness and depth of yearning and of pity, came flitting through the dusk, hurrying straight towards the waiting ambushed enemy.

He probably sat stunned and stupefied, so he himself believes, till roused by her cries, her agonised cries on him—on him, "Allan!" "Husband!"—for help.

At that the weak man rose up strong in his wrath, and the just man mighty in his indignation. One arm seized Elsie, the other felled her tormentor. Then, indeed, he, too, for a moment fell, and Elsie with him. Only for a moment. He soon rose again; the other man lay still.

There followed upon this evening a very tumult of emotions—of almost too painful happiness, contending with the harrowing anxiety, suspense, patience, pathos, and pity attendant upon illness and physical weakness and suffering; of sorrow and of joy; of fear and of hope; of tears and of laughter; of pleading and of thanksgiving; of confession and of absolution, of over-strained nobleness, over-submissive humbleness, of over-sensitive unselfishness, of high-strung fondness and foolishness, and of impossible resolve, altogether of goodness at such white heat that one dreaded lest indeed of its very own heat should come disfiguring crack and flaw—as, alas, no doubt such disfiguring crack and flaw will come, unless the heat cool down, sooner or later.

It was all quite too much for me, at my age, quite too much for me!

It is all over now, and we are quiet enough again now—Angela and I—quiet enough now, in the early autumn quiet, alone together at my cottage.

Braithwait is once more, for a while, shut up.

Allan has, according to his promise, gone back to the fair white house among the vines, of course taking Elsie with him, and loaded with every distinctively English good thing we could any of us think of, for the good people there.

Allan has, he writes us word, already taken the first step towards the execution of his scheme; he has bought the piece of ground on which he is going to build—as at once a thank-offering for the great mercies shown him by God, and as a memorial of his loving gratitude towards

the good Samaritan who was as God's human right hand stretched out to him—a spacious airy cheery mansion—to be called the Maison Bongrand, after the good Samaritan—and to be used as a "Maison d' aliénés"—a gentler, milder-sounding word than mad-house.

Till this is built, and is working, under the superintendence of Monsieur Bongrand's friend, who was Allan's doctor, and the old den of horrors is pulled down, I don't look to see Elsie and Allan home.

I should not wonder if they let Braithwait for a short term of years, for they will need to practise economy, as this institution of Allan's will have to be to some extent endowed.

In truth, I never look to see Allan and Elsie home.

Angela writes the end of this for me, at my dictation. My fingers have got stiff and cramped, they feel the coming of winter, and, probably, also of night—that night in which no man can work.

It is because Angela writes this for me that so little can be said about Angela. She is, indeed, Angela, for me, and for many besides me. She will, Heaven permitting, stay with me to my end. When that end comes all that I have is to be her own, and with it my heart's best blessings and prayers.

By-the-bye, it may be as well to mention, lest any disagreeable consequences should be dreaded for Allan, or any unpleasant results be apprehended from leaving a dead man always lying there in the larch-wood—spoiling the flowers among which he fell—that the man left there was not a dead man, but one who, after a time, got up and walked away.

Well, now, I have at last made an end of saying anything that need be said. And, I suppose, I may at last venture again to congratulate myself on Elsie's being "safely married."

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10, Abingdon-street, Cavendish-square, W.,
London, March 17, 1874.

I have used your Magnetine Appliances pretty personally to my patients they are uniformly other inventions of the kind which I have tried, their positive powers, I have no doubt. I have seen abdominal congestion, in neuralgia, and in many cases, and of the great organs of the abdomen. In my unqualified testimony in favour of your Magnetine, yours faithfully,

GARTH WILKINSON, M.D., M.R.C.S.E.

Holborn Hill (Cumberland).

In reply to your inquiry I beg to state that the "Magnetine" Appliances have given satisfaction in every instance. I have given details of the cases for which I recommended them, and in immediate and permanent benefit, that I feel in duty bound to mention of mine suffering much from severe and repeated attacks of neuralgia, which greatly interfered with his professional duties, and although he had tried many appropriate remedies, I thought it desirable to endeavour to cure him by the use of your Belts, and although it is nearly twelve months since he has never had the slightest indication of any return of his trouble.

I do not regard your "Belts" as "The Great Cure-all," I value them as a therapeutic agent, and believe that a more extended use of them in practice will be followed by the best results to physicians and patients.

Yours truly,

Darlow & Co.

J. DOBSON, M.D., F.A.S.

Reading, May 15, 1872.

GENTLEMEN,—I have given the Magnetic Skeuasma a somewhat extended trial in hospital as well as private practice, and I have much gratification in stating that as far as it is possible to judge of the curative merits of any remedy, I have seen exceedingly marked benefit from the effects of Skeuasma. The cases in which I have recommended it have been principally affections of the nervous system, and even in severe forms of such disorder I have found patients rapidly improve under the influence (as I believe) of this remedy.

I am, Gentlemen, yours truly,

To Darlow & Co.

RICHARD C. SHETTLE, M.D.

Woodcote, Warwick, April 30, 1873.

SIR,—I have much pleasure in stating that I have derived very material benefit from the use of the (Magnetic) Belt and other Appliances. After wearing the Belt a very short period, the rheumatic pains in my back were greatly relieved, and have since entirely left me. Several of my neighbours, also, to whom I have recommended the Appliances, have spoken most favourably of the results—particularly with reference to the Chest Protectors. The wife of one of my labourers, also, who has been a martyr to rheumatism for a very long period, has been relieved in a remarkable manner by the use of Wristlets and Anklets.

I remain, Sir, yours obediently,

W. C. WISE, M.P. for South Warwickshire.

Cley Rectory, Thetford, Norfolk, May 18th, 1873.

Messrs Darlow & Co.

DEAR SIR,—I enclose Post Office Order for my riding belt. I have now thoroughly tested the belt by riding long distances, as much as fifty or sixty miles a day, and by other exercises attended with strain to the back and loins; and I affirm, without hesitation, and also with much pleasure, that it has proved of great benefit to me. I beg now to ask your advice as to the following.

I remain, dear Sir, very truly yours,

(Rev.) THOS. J. BREWSHER.

DARLOW & CO., INVENTORS AND PATENTEES.

MAGNETINE APPLIANCES.

TESTIMONIALS.

Tarley Vicarage, Chelmsford, March 7, 1873.

GENTLEMEN,—I have now working for me a man, George Harrington by name, on whose behalf Miss Spurling, of Dyer's Hall, Great Maplestead, Essex, wrote you some months ago, as he was suffering from Rheumatism or Rheumatic Gout, which had completely disabled him for many months. You sent him a Belt and Chest Protector, which he has constantly worn, and he expresses the liveliest gratitude, as he feels he has derived great permanent benefit. Considering he had been assured by several doctors that he never could do any more work, he feels most thankful that he is able to do so as he does, and that I can say is no slight matter. From his account of himself, which he begged me to write and give you, I am led to ask for information, as I have another parishioner who is quite disabled from work, and seeing what your belts have done for George Harrington, I shall be glad if you will kindly send me particulars of what would be required for the other sufferer.

Yours faithfully,

Messrs Darlow & Co.

(Rev.) ROBERT HART.

20 Warwick Square, S.W., February 7, 1873.

SIR,—I know a gentleman, in his eighty-third year, who has suffered from Rheumatism for twelve years. It had lately become so severe and constant that he was scarcely ever free from pain. Last summer he tried your Magnetic Appliances. For six weeks they had no effect whatever. In another fortnight the pain abated, and shortly afterwards ceased; nor has he had the slightest return of it to this day. I cannot refuse your request to make this statement.

(Rev.) SAMUEL MINTON, M.A.,

Minister of Eaton Chapel.

To Mr Darlow,

London, S.W., March 11, 1873.

SIR,—Having suffered for several years from headache, which proceeded, I believe, from suppressed gout, I tried one of Mr Darlow's Magnetic Belts (which I have now worn for nearly six months), and have been gradually and perfectly relieved. I can only say of the Belts that they are marvellous in their effects, for I have never enjoyed such a complete freedom from headaches (which tormented my life) as during the last three months. With me the action has been slow, but continuous. I now enjoy very good health.

Yours truly,

(The Hon.) J. S. JOCELYN, Lieut.-Col.

44 Percival Street, London, and Barnet, Herts, July 7, 1874.

DEAR SIR,—I have allowed a considerable time to elapse before sending the result of the Spine Band bought for my son. His case was one, you will remember, pronounced to be *Epilepsy*; and to my great sorrow the fits appeared to be gaining in frequency and intensity. It was at this point I was induced to try the effect of your Bands, and as I noticed particularly the result in my pocket-book, I am careful to give the Account that it may be helpful to others in like circumstances. The *Spine Band* for a few days gave no relief. It was put on the beginning of December, 1873, and was continued to December 18th, when he had four slight fits in one day. It was then you suggested the *Stomach Appliance*, and though on the 19th it appeared to aggravate the symptoms, you encouraged him to persevere. He did so, and had perfect freedom from any attack till the 27th, and then only very slight; since which time till now (July 7, 1874), he has not had the least attack. I send you this record as a simple act of gratitude and thankfulness, that you have, under God, been the means of such relief to my son, and with the hope that if others have in their families those suffering from a like cause, they may be induced to try such exceedingly simple remedies.

Yours respectfully,

Mr Darlow.

FRED NEWTH.

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